



## **Montana Interoperability Project: A Perspective By Donita Demontiney**

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The Chippewa-Cree Tribe became a member of the Central Montana Interoperability Communications Consortium (CMICC) in 2004 after a long debate with the tribal council as to why it would be advantageous to our tribe to participate in this endeavor. After the initial assessment of radio coverage for our land base, it became apparent that the development of the interoperability infrastructure utilizing Centennial Mountain would be beneficial for all of the consortia, and it would greatly improve the overall coverage of our land base since most of the area consists of deep ravines and valleys. The proposed project is to develop Centennial because it is the highest area in north central Montana and has been previously used for communications efforts, so it has the proven record for effectiveness.

The initial assessment also showed that development of Centennial Mountain will allow for radio communications deep within the Choteau County area and improve services for the City of Fort Benton that lies in the Missouri River valley. Radio services for our area will improve with the new radio systems, and repeaters will aid those areas where there has never been radio coverage before. This will improve communications efforts in emergency situations such as search and rescue and fire suppression as well as maintain security in the event of terrorism threats.

The downside to interoperability is the cost of new P-25 system radios and other equipment needed to upgrade the system. Most tribes do not have the finances to purchase the equipment, and they rely solely on the state for funding. As this project develops throughout the nation, it is hoped that funding will be more widely available.

The Chippewa-Cree gains positive recognition by its participation in a project that ultimately stretches across the nation.

***Donita is a member of the Chippewa-Cree Tribe  
and the Central Montana Interoperability Consortium.***